

## IN BRIEF

THE GENDER OF THE GENUS *BATIS* BOIE, 1833

*Batis* Boie was proposed in the *Isis von Oken*, 1833, col. 880 at a time when only 3 species of the genus as presently interpreted were known to science, these being *B. capensis* (Linnaeus), 1766, *B. senegalensis* (Linnaeus), 1766, and *B. pririt* (Vieillot), 1818. The type-species was subsequently fixed by Sharpe, *Cat. Birds Brit. Mus.*, 1879, vol. 4: 133, as *Muscicapa capensis* Linnaeus, 1766. Boie did not indicate which gender his genus *Batis* should take, but the original references of valid taxa and their synonyms given by Traylor, in Peters' *Check-list of Birds of the World*, 1986, vol. XI: 378–385, reveal that all given the name of *Batis* have the gender of the specific (or subspecific) name feminine, with one exception, namely *Batis minor suahelicus* Neumann, 1907, a synonym of nominate *B. minor* Erlanger, 1901. In *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, 1984, 104: 144–146, W. J. Lawson described as a new species *Batis occultus* from Mt Nimba, Liberia, which is closely allied to the insular *B. poensis* Alexander, 1903, of Fernando Pòo; but in his later revision of the evergreen forest species of *Batis* in *Durban Mus. Novit.*, 1986, vol. 13, (21): 285–304, he changed the name to *B. occulta*. In this he followed the guidance of the present author who had access to the 1986 paper while it was still in proof.

In their recent paper on the occurrence of *B. minima* (Verreaux & Verreaux), 1855, in Cameroon, Erard & Colston, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, 1988, 108: 182–184, refer to Lawson's new form from Mt Nimba as either *B. occultus* or *Batis poensis (occultus)*, overlooking its correction in 1986 to *occulta*. As the status of this latter taxon is certain to figure again in future communications, it is desirable to settle the question of the gender of the genus *Batis*. On the basis of consensus in usage over the past century and more and its adoption by Traylor, *op. cit.*, the gender of *Batis* requires to be seen as feminine.

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17 February 1989

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DWARF EGGS IN THE BLACK-HEADED GULL *LARUS RIDIBUNDUS*

Dwarf eggs, in the sense of small eggs without yolk or with very little yolk, are well-known in many species of birds. The frequency of their occurrence, however, is much less documented. From 1973 to 1988 I regularly visited a colony of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* near Amsterdam to count the numbers of clutches and eggs. Since dwarf eggs can be readily recognized amongst the thousands of normally sized eggs they could be counted accurately. In a total of 107,500 eggs, 40 were dwarf eggs, which means only 0.037%. Thirty-nine were measured (Table 1).